Topics for Midterm Exam Fall 2004

I. Introduction
Republics of the former Soviet Union, their location on the map and capitals. Population size, larger and smaller republics (area and population)
Location of the xUSSR on the globe, extreme points (North, South, East, West). Location relative to the US.
Territory and population size relative to the US.
Cultural diversity

II. Physical Geography - Landforms
Uniformity/ diversity of landscape and climate. Tectonic plates, Tectonic forces and gradational processes. Their role in shaping landforms of the xUSSR.
Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic (Alpine) landforms. Continental platforms and mountain belts.
Major landforms, their origin and location. Mountain systems of different age, their location and characteristics. Mineral associated with landforms. Distribution of volcanism and earthquakes.
Impact of glaciation on landforms.
Mafor rivers, drainage basins, direction of flow of principal rivers.
Impact of landforms on climate.

III. Physical Geography - climate
Factors affecting climate (latitude, distance from oceans, mountains).
Major regularities of climate of xUSSR. Northerly location, continentality, landforms.
Patterns of air pressure, winds, temperature and precipitation in the summer and winter. Permafrost.

IV. Physical Geography – Natural regions
Major natural regions, their location, natural regions within Russia and Central Asia.
Implications of physical geography for human settlement and activity.
Map questions – location of major features of terrain, rivers, oceans, seas, and lakes (see the list). Make sure that you know in which direction the rivers flow.

V. Historical geography: Russian territorial growth
Peoples of the steppes North of the Black sea before the Slavs. Early Slavs and ethnic groups that affected them.
Kievan Rus, its formation, location, fragmentation.
Mongol-Tatar Yoke and its impact on Slavs, Russian state, and culture.
Implications of the territorial growth for the ethnic make-up of the population of Russia and USSR.

VI. Historical geography: Central Asian republics
Natural regions of Central Asia, their impact on human settlement, settled (sedentary) agriculture, and pastoralist societies.
History of Central Asia – major stages, from ancient states to Soviet republics.
Ancient states in Central Asia – Khorezm, Sogd (Sogdiana), Bactria, Parthia.
Impact of pastoralist cultures on sedentary civilizations.
Examples of the cultural impact of Central Asia on other regions of the world.

VII. Stages of Soviet development
Russian Empire and Russian Revolutions 1905-1907, February 1917, October 1917.
Marxism as a foundation of the Soviet state ideology. Its differences from neo-classical economics in explaining economy and labor.
Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov
+ Chernenko, Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Putin
Changes in policy that corresponded to their leadership.
Soviet policies of cultural revolution, industrialization, collectivization and their effects. Reforming socialism and abandoning socialism
Advantages and disadvantages of the Soviet system.

VIII. Soviet system and administrative-territorial division
Soviet government and political system, economic management, the Communist Party structure.
Major changes under Yeltsin.
Territorial units – ethnic, non-ethnic, economic

IX. Ethnicity and religion
Cultural evolution and cultural diffusion. Linguistic families. Major linguistic families of the ex-USSR.
Major religions and their geography. Soviet atheism. Cultural role of religion in soviet and post-soviet period.